

The United Nations System — Common Approach Towards a Pollution-Free Planet

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Executive Summary

Pollution is one of the triple planetary crises, together with climate change and biodiversity loss. It impedes progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty, food insecurity and hunger, health, inequality, peace, and justice.

For the purposes of this Common Approach, pollution is understood as the presence or introduction into the environment of substances or energy that cause adverse effects on human health, the environment or living organisms; or exceed the quality or quantity criteria established for certain environmental media.

Pollution is an insidious and pervasive problem. It poses significant impacts on human health and well-being, the environment, and the overall well-being of our planet. Its deleterious effects are staggering in both scope and scale.

In 2017, recognizing this pressing issue, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) prioritized pollution in the global agenda, issuing a Ministerial Declaration - “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”. In response, an Implementation Plan, “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”, was developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and welcomed in the following year at the fourth session of the UNEA. In this context, the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) decided to establish a Consultative Process on a pollution-free planet to prepare a UN System Common Approach to transitioning towards a pollution-free planet (hereafter referred to as the *Common Approach to Pollution*).

As a framework for action, the United Nations System expresses a shared recognition of the urgency of acting and a commitment to mainstreaming pollution prevention and reduction through better coordinated efforts. These efforts will connect and build on the strategies and programmes

of the work of the United Nations System entities and facilitate the implementation of related treaties.

The Common Approach to Pollution is guided by 10 principles and approaches, namely: intergenerational equity; participation, access to information and access to justice; polluter pays principle; precautionary principle; leave no one behind; human rights-based approach; prevention; science and evidence-based decision making; circular economy; and the One Health approach.

The framework is designed to achieve a shared aspirational goal: a pollution-free planet for the health and well-being of people and the environment, where the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all is ensured. This goal implies that pollution is prevented and reduced to levels that are not harmful to human and planetary health, including through the efficient management of chemicals and waste.

The Common Approach to Pollution is structured to achieve impact in three areas: (a) People: focusing on the protection and promotion of human rights, health, and well-being of individuals, groups and communities; (b) Planet: focusing on maintaining and restoring healthy and productive ecosystems to support life on Earth, and to provide valuable resources for society; and (c) Inclusive and sustainable growth: emphasizing the importance of fostering economic and societal transformation that balances the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations. To accelerate transformational change, the Common Approach, creates opportunities for collective action and joint delivery of initiatives led by the UN System entities at all levels, from global to subnational, while pursuing alignment within the respective entities.

The Common Approach to Pollution presents 11 medium-term Objectives and 30 Outcomes that contribute to the realization of the Goal. They are expected to be achieved through UN System efforts, both within the System itself and through partnership with States, private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, other actors, and all people.

Options for action are also suggested for next steps following the adoption of the Common Approach to Pollution, such as the establishment of an Issue Management Group (IMG) on Pollution within the EMG to design the Implementation Plan of the Common Approach to Pollution and monitor its execution.

Successful implementation of the Common Approach to Pollution is contingent on the commitment and capacity of UN entities and partners to harmonize and scale-up their initiatives for pollution prevention and reduction. With adequate resources and the integration of this

approach into the UN entities' strategies and work programmes, the UN Systems shall pave the way for a stronger, more coordinated global response towards a pollution-free planet.

I. Background

1. Pollution is one of the triple planetary crises, together with climate change and biodiversity loss. It is a global driver of biodiversity loss¹ and contributes to climate change², and is, in turn, exacerbated by ecosystem degradation and climate change. These interlinkages hinder the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty, food insecurity³ and hunger, health, inequality, peace, and justice.
2. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 76/300⁴ recognizes that environmental damage interferes with the right to a clean, sustainable environment and has negative implications for various human rights, such as food, water, health, and an adequate standard of living.⁵
3. For the purposes of this Common Approach, *pollution* is understood as the presence or introduction into the environment of substances or energy that cause adverse effects on human health, the environment or living organisms; or that exceed the quality or quantity criteria established for certain environmental media.⁶
4. Some forms of pollution, such as air pollution, water contamination, industrial waste, and noise pollution are more noticeable. However, other types, such as pesticides contamination in food production or endocrine-disrupting chemicals in personal care products, are less apparent. The range of solutions to these pollution problems is as diverse as their origins.⁷

¹ The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (2019). *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (summary for policy makers). IPBES Plenary at its seventh session (IPBES 7, Paris, 2019). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579>

² United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2021). *Making Peace with Nature: A Scientific Blueprint to Tackle the Climate, Biodiversity and Pollution Emergencies*. Nairobi. <https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2022). The future of food and agriculture – drivers and triggers for transformation, [section VI]. *The Future of Food and Agriculture*, no. 3. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0959en>

⁴ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (2022). *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment: resolution 76/300*. <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3983329>

⁵ Also recognized in: Human Rights Council (HRC) (2021). *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment: resolution 48/13*. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2FRES%2F48%2F13&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangReqsted=False>

⁶ Other definitions include the direct and indirect alteration of biological, thermal, physical, or radioactive properties of any medium that create a (potential) hazard to human health or the safety, health or welfare of any living species. More information here: UN InforMEA. (n.d.). Pollution. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.infornea.org/en/terms/pollution>

⁷ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2017). *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet: Background Report*. Nairobi. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/towards-pollution-free-planet-background-report>

5. All economic sectors – including agrifood systems, extractives/mining sector, transport, building and construction – can cause pollution through unsustainable practices and technologies.⁸ Pollution could also be caused by a range of natural phenomena, including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, wildfires, sand dust storms, and algal blooms.
6. Pollution is an insidious and pervasive problem that impacts human health and well-being, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and the wider environment. It poses serious challenges to the overall well-being of the planet. Its deleterious effects are staggering in both scope and scale.⁹ The severity of pollution depends on the chemical nature, concentration, presence and persistence of the pollutant.
7. Pollution alone is responsible for approximately nine million deaths per year, with seven million attributable to air pollution.¹⁰ These alarming statistics highlight the significant human toll and the urgent need to address pollution in a systemic way.
8. The exposure to and the impact of pollution are dependent on factors, such as gender, age, life stage, and health status. Pollution has disproportionately negative impacts on women and girls, and those segments of the population that are already in vulnerable situations. This includes Indigenous Peoples,¹¹ children,¹² older persons and persons with disabilities,¹³ youth, those living in conditions of extreme poverty and malnutrition,¹⁴ communities living in the surroundings of polluting sources, such as industrial facilities, workers at heightened risk of hazardous occupational exposure, and individuals with underlying health conditions, such as cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes and autoimmune diseases.¹⁵ These populations often lack

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ For instance, the pervasive nature of plastic pollution alone highlights the extent of the problem. Plastic waste has infiltrated every corner of the Earth's ecosystems, from mountain peaks to the depths of marine environments, freshwater systems, the remote Arctic, the atmosphere, global soils, and even the human body. Persistent organic pollutants, such as heavy metals, can be found in the tissues of plants and animals in the most remote areas of the polar ice caps, the deep abyssal ocean and high mountains.

¹⁰ Fuller R. et al. (2022). Pollution and health: a progress update. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 6 (6), 535-547.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(22\)00090-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(22)00090-0)

¹¹ Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately impacted by pesticides and toxins, leading to cycles of poverty, exposure to violence, and health disparities. See Orellana, M. (2022). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Implications for Human Rights of the Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal of Hazardous Substances and Wastes: The Impact of Toxic Substances on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a77183-impact-toxic-substances-human-rights-indigenous-peoples-report>

¹² Children, due to their unique physiology and developing organ systems, are especially vulnerable. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (n.d.). *Healthy Environments for Healthy Children*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/health/healthy-environments>

¹³ UNGA (2022). *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment: resolution 76/300*. <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3983329>

¹⁴ According to a World Bank report, 80 per cent of people exposed to unsafe PM2.5 concentrations are in low- and middle-income countries. Rentschler, J. and Leonova, N. (2022). Air pollution and poverty: PM2.5 exposure in 211 countries and territories. Policy Research Working Paper;10005. © World Bank, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/37322>

¹⁵ *The Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Environment on Sacrifice Zones A/HRC/49/53* states that the ongoing toxification of people and the planet is causing environmental injustices and creating "sacrifice zones". In such extremely contaminated areas, vulnerable and marginalized groups bear a disproportionate burden of the health, human rights and environmental consequences of exposure to pollution and hazardous substances.

the means for recourse to adequate access to health care, information, opportunities to protect themselves from exposure to the impacts of pollution, and access to remedy.

9. Pollution has serious effects on the environment. Air pollution could lead to acidification and eutrophication of water and soil, impair photosynthesis and reduce plant growth. The atmospheric deposition of nitrogen and sulphur resulting from air pollution is a major stressor to natural ecosystems. Soil pollution affects soil organisms and plant growth, thereby affecting wildlife. Pollution of freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems can lead to eutrophication. Harmful algal blooms impact the health and size of species, such as frogs and seabirds; the feminization of fish; disappearance of corals, invertebrates and fish species; and thyroid disorders in whales and other mammals. The impact of pollution on the environment disrupts ecological services, such as carbon storage, pollination, nutrient cycling and water purification.¹⁶ Furthermore, air pollution exacerbates climate change, leading to more powerful storms, aggravating coastal flooding, and bringing higher temperatures and longer droughts. Emerging climate-related risks of pollution require a change in ways we measure disaster risks.¹⁷
10. Apart from the impact on health and the environment, pollution also causes significant economic and social losses, e.g., in cultural heritage. Pollution negatively impacts various sectors, such as agrifood systems¹⁸, health care, and tourism. This results in increased health care expenditure, lost productivity, lost income, lost jobs, and hindered economic growth. The full extent of the economic impact of pollution, including the financial losses associated with disasters caused by natural hazards, is only beginning to be understood.^{19,20}
11. The prevailing global economic model characterized by linear consumption and production patterns of "take, make, use, and dispose" largely drives pollution from human activities. This approach results in unsustainable practices related to production, consumption, lifestyles, and resource usage. To transition towards a sustainable future, it is crucial to uncouple the use of natural resources and environmental impacts from economic growth.²¹

¹⁶UNEP (2017). *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*. Nairobi. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/towards-pollution-free-planet-background-report>

¹⁷ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*. Geneva. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/global-assessment-report-disaster-risk-reduction-2019> ; Senathirajah K. et al. (2023). A disaster risk reduction framework for the new global instrument to end plastic pollution, *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, p.449. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2023.131020>

¹⁸ FAO and UNEP (2021). *Global Assessment of Soil Pollution: Report*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4894en>

¹⁹ FAO (2021). *The Impact of Disasters and Crises on Agriculture and Food Security: 2021*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3673en>
²⁰ A 2022 World Bank report estimates that the health damage caused by air pollution costs \$8.1 trillion annually, equivalent to 6.1 per cent of global GDP. See World Bank. (2022). *What You Need to Know About Climate Change and Air Pollution*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/09/01/what-you-need-to-know-about-climate-change-and-air-pollution#:~:text=A%20World%20Bank%20report%20estimated,to%206.1%25%20of%20global%20GDP.>

²¹ International Resource Panel (IRP) and UNEP (2019). *Global Resources Outlook 2019*. Natural resources for the future we want. Nairobi. <https://www.resourcepanel.org/reports/global-resources-outlook>

12. Chemicals use and waste generation are projected to increase significantly in the coming years.²² Unsustainable production and consumption patterns have tripled the use of natural resource since 1970. Concerted global action is essential to address the immense challenges of pollution, and strategies must involve multiple stakeholders and sectors.
13. Promoting sustainable consumption and production,²³ clean technologies, and designing products with the circular economy in mind are essential to preventing and reducing pollution. This requires minimizing the environmental and social impacts of products and services throughout their life cycle by shifting to practices that minimize the release of pollutants and the generation of waste; reduce the use of harmful chemicals; conserve natural resources; and provide health and economic benefits. This shift creates new economic opportunities and promotes sustainable growth. Circular economy aims at eliminating the use and production of hazardous substances and promotes the continual use of resources in a closed loop. Pursuing circular economy addresses the triple planetary crisis, while contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.
14. Research, development, and innovation in clean technologies and practices are critical to addressing pollution. In addition, citizen science initiatives provide valuable public participation in data collection and expand environmental research. Sharing these data with policymakers, businesses, and the public can raise awareness and support evidence-based action.
15. Establishing sound regulatory and management frameworks is critical to preventing and reducing pollution and its associated risks. These frameworks provide essential guidance, standards, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure responsible practices and to minimize environmental impacts. Effective regulations set emission limits, mandate cleaner technologies, promote waste reduction and proper disposal, and support sustainable practices. Monitoring, reporting, and enforcement hold polluters accountable, safeguarding ecosystems, protecting human health, and fostering sustainable development.

II. Context and current UN System efforts related to pollution

²² UNEP (2019). *Global Chemicals Outlook II*. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/policy-and-governance/global-chemicals-outlook>; Silpa, K. (2018). *What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050*. Urban Development; © Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/30317>

²³ Sustainable consumption and production refer to “the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations”. Source: UNEP. (n.d.). *Sustainable Consumption and Production Policies*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/sustainable-consumption-and-production-policies#:~:text=Sustainable%20consumption%20and%20production%20refers,the%20service%20or%20product%20so>

16. The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) placed pollution at the top of the global agenda and issued a Ministerial Declaration²⁴: “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”. Environment Ministers expressed their “commitment to working towards a pollution-free planet for the health and well-being of our people and the environment”, and also called for the development of an Implementation Plan - “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”²⁵. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) developed the Implementation Plan with inputs from a wide range of partners. At the fourth session of UNEA in 2019, the Implementation Plan was identified as the vehicle for prompt implementation of the goals of the Ministerial Declaration, relevant UNEA resolutions and other voluntary commitments. The Implementation Plan outlines five action areas, namely knowledge, implementation, infrastructure, awareness, and leadership to accelerate the transition to a pollution-free planet. For its operationalization, the Implementation Plan recognizes the capacity gaps faced by States and stakeholders at different levels in tackling pollution and the need for broad partnership and mobilization of all relevant stakeholders.
17. The UN System, as well as other stakeholders, are investing a substantial amount of economic and human resources in addressing pollution or dealing with its consequences. These investments can be maximized through a coordinated and coherent approach to implement UN System commitments towards a pollution-free planet. Existing efforts will benefit from stronger synergies, common messages, coherent methods and approaches, and a more coordinated action by the UN System to achieve greater impact.
18. In this context, Senior Officials of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) decided at their 27th meeting, in October 2021,²⁶ to establish a Consultative Process on a pollution-free planet to prepare a UN System Common Approach to transitioning towards a pollution-free planet (hereafter referred to as the *Common Approach to Pollution*) to provide a framework for collective action in support of the Implementation Plan “Towards a Pollution-Free Planet”.²⁷

²⁴ United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) (2017). *Ministerial Declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its Third Session Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22586/Ministerial%20declaration%20of%20the%20United%20Nations%20Environment%20Assembly%20at%20its%20third%20session_Towards%20a%20pollution%20free%20planet.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#:~:text=%E2%80%9C

²⁵ UNEA (2019). *Implementation Plan Towards a Pollution-Free Planet: resolution 21*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/K19/011/58/PDF/K1901158.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁶ United Nations Environment Management Group (EMG). (2021). *Summary Report of Proceedings of the 27th Meeting of the Senior Officials of the Environment Management Group*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Summary-Report-SOM27_Final.pdf

²⁷ UNEP and EMG (2022). *Consultative Process on a Pollution-Free Planet: Terms of Reference*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ToR_pollution_draft.pdf

19. As part of the EMG's Consultative Process on a pollution-free planet framework, a mapping exercise was conducted to provide a review of current activities and initiatives related to pollution within the UN System.²⁸
20. The review found that many UN System²⁹ entities are addressing pollution through their mandates, expertise, and operations to promote improvements in environmental quality, human health, and resilience³⁰; to advance the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; and to support multi-stakeholder actions for sustainable development. However, the review found that efforts are not comprehensive and are often fragmented. The review concluded that a well-integrated and coordinated approach to pollution across various levels of the UN System is necessary to achieve tangible and ambitious goals. It also emphasized that a short- to medium-term roadmap could be instrumental in stimulating concerted action.
21. In November 2022, a roadmap for developing the UN System Common Approach to transitioning towards a pollution-free planet (hereafter referred to as the *Common Approach to Pollution*) was agreed upon by members from the Consultative Process and the EMG focal points. A Small Drafting Team was established in January 2023. It was composed of representatives from FAO, IAEA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, UNIDO, WB, and WHO, and led by three co-chairs from FAO, UNEP, and WHO.
22. Through the Common Approach to Pollution, the UN System demonstrates a shared recognition of the urgency of action and a commitment to mainstreaming pollution prevention and reduction into the programmes and operations. Building on the existing efforts, the Common Approach to Pollution is designed to help the UN System align its efforts with its values, promote collaboration, and advance coordination to mobilize, accelerate, and scale up the sustainable, inclusive and just transition towards a pollution-free planet. It also provides a framework to leverage and advance existing inter-agency arrangements that address pollution-related issues. Achieving a pollution-free planet will require ambition, system-wide transformation, and strengthened capacity at all levels, from global to subnational.

²⁸ The review identified roles and mandates of the Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes of the UN System, UN interagency arrangements and partnerships that contribute to a pollution-free planet, grouping UN entities according to broad thematic areas and sectors. It also identified potential opportunities for further collaboration and leveraging the potential of UN entities in the areas of knowledge, implementation, infrastructure, awareness, and leadership. Access the report here: EMG (2023). *An Overview of UN Activities and Initiatives Related to Pollution*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/20_02.23-Mapping-Efforts-Pollution.pdf

²⁹ United Nations System in the context of the document includes the United Nations Secretariat entities and the UN specialized agencies, programmes and funds, each with their own mandate, governance and budget. See United Nations Department of Global Communications (2021). The United Nations System Chart. https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/un_system_chart.pdf

³⁰ United Nations (2020). *United Nations Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies*. New York (UN). <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/UN-Resilience-Guidance-Final-Sept.pdf>

23. The Common Approach to Pollution also builds on the Model Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN programming³¹ and the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the environment for the UN System (SWFS)³², and will become an important implementation pillar of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020-2030³³. It is consistent with the Common Approach to Integrating Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions for Sustainable Development into United Nations Policy and Programme Planning and Delivery³⁴ by emphasizing the need to conserve ecosystems. Both strategies recognize the interconnectedness and interdependence of our environmental systems, and the necessity for integrated, holistic solutions including nature-based solutions.
24. The Common Approach to Pollution aligns with the goals and objectives of the Rio Conventions, namely the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),³⁵ the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),³⁶ and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).³⁷ It also aligns with and supports implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions,³⁸ the Minamata Convention,³⁹ the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer,⁴⁰ the Secretary-General's vision on prevention,⁴¹ the Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity

³¹ EMG (2019). *Moving Towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FINAL_Model_Approach_ES-Standards-1.pdf

³² EMG (2019). *System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment for the UN System (SWFS)*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/images/emgdocs/UN_sws/Final%20final%20Version%20020516.pdf

³³ Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) (2021). *Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030, phase 2*. <https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/CEB.2021.2.Add.1-Strategy%20for%20Sustainability%20Management%20in%20the%20United%20Nations.Phase%20II.pdf>

³⁴ CEB (2021). *Common Approach to Integrating Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions for Sustainable Development into United Nations Policy and Programme Planning and Delivery*. https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/CEB_2021_1_Add.1%20%28Biodiversity%20Common%20Approach%29.pdf

³⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Bonn. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

³⁶ *Convention on Biological Diversity*. (1992). Rio de Janeiro. <https://www.cbd.int/convention/text/>

³⁷ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (1994). 10. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa*. Paris. https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsq_no=XXVII-10&chapter=27&clang=en

³⁸ Basel Convention: UNEP (1989). *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal*. Basel. <https://www.brsmeas.org/Resources/Shared/scripts/appPubKit/docs/02-BaselConvention-Text.English.pdf>, Rotterdam Convention: UNEP (revised in 2013). *Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade*. Rotterdam. <https://www.brsmeas.org/Resources/Shared/scripts/appPubKit/docs/02-RotterdamConvention-Text.English.pdf>, Stockholm Convention: UNEP (2009). *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)*. Stockholm. <https://www.brsmeas.org/Resources/Shared/scripts/appPubKit/docs/02-StockholmConvention-Text.English.pdf>

³⁹ UNEP (2013). *Minamata Convention on Mercury*. Minamata. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/minamata-convention-mercury-text-and-annexes>

⁴⁰ UNEP (n.d.). *The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*. Retrieved July 2023.

<https://ozone.unep.org/treaties/montreal-protocol/montreal-protocol-substances-deplete-ozone-layer>

⁴¹ United Nations, "Priorities: prevention". Available at UN (2023). *Priorities: Prevention*. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/prevention.shtml>

Frameworks,⁴² the Paris Agreement,⁴³ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030⁴⁴, the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction⁴⁵ in addressing pollution-related risks and challenges, relevant regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and other relevant treaties.

25. Following the adoption of the Common Approach to Pollution, an Implementation Plan for the Common Approach will be developed by UN entities. Implementation modalities will include both system-wide efforts and efforts promoting the engagement of agencies on issues of relevance. Implementation of the Common Approach to Pollution will consider emerging pollution issues. Ensuring accountability throughout the implementation of the approach will further strengthen the commitment of the UN System to a pollution-free planet and to the overall success of the endeavour.

III. Key Guiding Principles and Approaches

26. The Common Approach to Pollution is guided by the following 10 principles and approaches, the first four being among the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development⁴⁶ (Rio principles):

1. **Intergenerational equity:**⁴⁷ for the purposes of the Common Approach to Pollution, intergenerational equity is described as fairness and justice between all present and future generations. The principle holds that to promote prosperity and quality of life for all, the needs of today's generation should be met without compromising the ability of

⁴² UNEP (2022). *Convention on Biological Diversity – Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. Montreal. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e6d3/cd1d/daf663719a03902a9b116c34/cop-15-l-25-en.pdf>

⁴³ UNFCCC (2015). Paris Agreement. Paris. https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf?gclid=Cj0KCQjwwlSIBhD6ARIsAES_Amp7D7qRlqVRtusdnDz5Y1kkWYbqS-wTFb34_btDvhKxdlczbihokxj0aArCOEALw_wcB

⁴⁴ UNDRR (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030*. Sendai. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

⁴⁵ UNEA (2023). *Intergovernmental Conference on an International Legally Binding Instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Resumed Fifth Session*. https://www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org.bbnj/files/draft_agreement_advanced_unedited_for_posting_v1.pdf

⁴⁶ UNGA (1992). *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*. Rio de Janeiro. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.151_26_Vol.I_Declaration.pdf

⁴⁷ Original Rio Principle definition: The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

future generations to meet their own needs. It is a multisectoral and cross-cultural concept grounded in sustainable development.⁴⁸

2. **Participation, access to information, and access to justice:** environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all citizens concerned, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.
3. **Polluter-pays principle:** the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution caused, with due regard to public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.
4. **Precautionary principle:** where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for avoiding measures to prevent harm to human health or the environment.
5. **Leave no one behind (LNOB):** refers to ensuring meaningful inclusion, participation, and progress in closing development gaps for all population groups. LNOB not only entails reaching the most vulnerable but requires combating discrimination and rising inequalities within and amongst countries, and their root causes.⁴⁹
6. **Human rights-based approach (HRBA):** refers to the design and implementation of policies and programmes based on international human rights standards and law aiming to address inequalities and achieve well-being and dignity for all. The HRBA focuses on strengthening the capacities of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and of right-holders to claim their rights at all stages. The HRBA calls for a vision of pollution-related policy that aligns with scientific evidence, centres on principles of non-

⁴⁸ The High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) working group on the inter-generational equity involving 16 UN agencies. See also: UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) (n.d.). *Leave No One Behind*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

⁴⁹ UNSDG (n.d.). *Leave No One Behind*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>. Also included in EMG (2019). *Moving Towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FINAL_Model_Approach_ES-Standards-1.pdf

discrimination, accountability and informed participation and, gives special attention to the needs of individuals, groups, and peoples in vulnerable situations.^{50,51}

7. **Prevention:** where the harmful effects of an action or substance are already known, application of the principle of prevention ensures protection.⁵² Unless prevention of exposure is required as the norm, people in vulnerable situations will continue to bear the brunt of toxic exposure in the production, consumption, and disposal life cycles of our economy.⁵³
8. **Science and evidence-based decision-making:** decisions should be informed by the best available evidence from scientific research, traditional knowledge and consider as well other factors, such as context, public opinion, equity, feasibility of implementation, affordability, sustainability, and acceptability to stakeholders. It is a systematic and transparent approach that applies structured and replicable methods to identify, appraise, and make use of evidence across decision-making processes, including for implementation.⁵⁴
9. **Circular economy:** refers to an economic system in which products and materials are designed in such a way that they can be reused, remanufactured, recycled or recovered. Products and materials are thus maintained in the economy for as long as possible, along with the resources of which they are made. The generation of waste, especially hazardous waste, is avoided or minimized, and greenhouse gas emissions are prevented or reduced.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ See UNSDG (2003). *The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies*. New York. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/human-rights-based-approach-development-cooperation-towards-common-understanding-among-un>. For more information, also see EMG (2019). *Moving Towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FINAL_Model_Approach_ES-Standards-1.pdf; UN (n.d.). *The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://hrbportal.org/the-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation-towards-a-common-understanding-among-un-agencies/>; and OHCHR (2023). *The Impacts of Climate Change on the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights – OHCHR and Climate Change*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change/impacts-climate-change-effective-enjoyment-human-rights>

⁵¹ EMG (2019). *Moving Towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FINAL_Model_Approach_ES-Standards-1.pdf.

⁵² See Orellana, M. (2022). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Implications for Human Rights of the Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal of Hazardous Substances and Wastes*. The stages of the plastics cycle and their impacts on human rights – para. 91. United Nations. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/201/78/PDF/N2120178.pdf?OpenElement>

⁵³ UNGA (2019). Implications for Human Rights of the Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal of Hazardous Substances and Wastes - para. 40. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/304/14/PDF/N1930414.pdf?OpenElement>

⁵⁴ World Health Organization (WHO) (2019). *WHO Guide for Evidence-Informed Decision-Making*. Geneva. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240039872> Also see UNEP, OHCHR (2021). *Human Rights and Hazardous Substances – Key Messages*. Geneva.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/materials/KMHazardousSubstances25febLight.pdf> and Economic and Social Council (ESC) (2020). General comment No. 25 (2020) on science and economic, social and cultural rights (article 15 (1) (b), (2), (3) and (4) of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2020-article-15-science-and>

⁵⁵ UNEA (2021). *Enhancing Circular Economy as a Contribution to Achieving Sustainable Consumption and Production: resolution 11*. <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39920/ENHANCING%20CIRCULAR%20ECONOMY%20AS%20A%20CO>

10. One Health approach: an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and other organisms, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines, and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, acting on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development.⁵⁶

IV. Framework of the Common Approach to Pollution

A. Goal

27. The shared aspirational goal of the Common Approach to Pollution is a pollution-free planet for the health and well-being of people and the environment where the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all is ensured. This goal implies that pollution is prevented and reduced to levels that are not harmful to human and planetary health, including through the sound management of chemicals and wastes.

28. The Common Approach to Pollution is organized around the goal, impact areas, objectives, and outcomes (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Structure of the Common Approach to Pollution

[NTRIBUTION%20TO%20ACHIEVING%20SUSTAINABLE%20CONSUMPTION%20AND%20PRODUCTION.%20English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](#)

⁵⁶ FAO, UNEP, WHO and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) (2021). Joint Tripartite (FAO, OIE, WHO). and UNEP Statement Tripartite and UNEP support One Health High-Level Expert Panel's (OHHLEP) definition of "One Health". <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7869en/cb7869en.pdf>



B. Impact areas

29. The impact areas are key areas of influence where long-term systemic change is expected to be achieved. The impact areas of the Common Approach to Pollution are:

- a. **People: emphasizing the protection and promotion of human rights, health, food security and nutrition, and the well-being of individuals, groups, and communities.**

This impact area emphasizes the importance of addressing pollution to ensure that people can live in a safe, clean, healthy, resilient, and sustainable environment, which directly impacts their quality of life and overall well-being. The Common Approach to Pollution promotes specific positive impacts, such as reductions in the burden of disease attributable to infectious and non-communicable diseases and environmental factors; increased socioeconomic equity and reduced health inequities; increased community engagement and collaboration in tackling pollution; improved skills and knowledge among individuals and communities to make risk-informed decisions to prevent and reduce pollution; increased productivity and reduced health care costs associated with pollution-related illnesses; and overall improvements in living conditions.

By focusing on "People", the Common Approach to Pollution underscores the necessity of addressing the health and well-being of individuals and communities by reducing pollution and its adverse effects, especially on women and girls and those segments of

the population in vulnerable situations, including Indigenous Peoples,⁵⁷ children, older persons, persons with disabilities, among others.

- b. **Planet: focusing on the preservation and restoration of healthy and productive ecosystems to sustain life on Earth and continue providing ecosystem goods and services for society.** This emphasizes the importance of pollution prevention and reduction to ensure the preservation and resilience of the planetary system, crucial for the survival and prosperity of all ecosystems and species, including humans. The Common Approach to Pollution aims to safeguard positive impacts, such as clean air, soil, and water quality, halting the loss of biodiversity, climate regulation and other ecosystems goods and services. It emphasizes the importance of sustainable natural resource use and management, along with the protection, conservation, and improvement of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, from source to sea. Initiatives include the restoration of damaged ecosystems, revitalization of urban ecosystems, building ecosystem resilience, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, and strengthening marine protected areas, amongst others.

By focusing on the "Planet", the Common Approach to Pollution strives to maintain the natural balance and resilience of our environment, thereby ensuring a sustainable, thriving planet for present and future generations.

- c. **Inclusive and sustainable growth: emphasizing the importance of fostering economic and societal transformation that balances the short-term needs of the present generation with the longer-term needs of future generations.**⁵⁸ Inclusive growth ensures that the benefits of economic development are shared equitably among all members of society, including vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged population groups. Sustainable growth focuses on balancing economic growth with social and environmental considerations and meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfil their needs. The Common Approach to Pollution advocates for measuring the contributions of nature and ecosystems to society, with multiple positive impacts, including job creation in green sectors, reduced resource depletion, resource efficiency, risk-informed investments and financing, and

⁵⁷ The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2023, under the theme "Indigenous Peoples, Human Health, Planetary and Territorial Health and Climate Change: A Rights-Based Approach", has referred to the importance of rights-based approaches that include the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' individual rights but also Indigenous Peoples' collective rights over resources that are communal. This is an important area of work for the United Nations (UN), and it is rooted in Articles 1, 2 and 40 of the United Nations (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

⁵⁸ CEB (2023). *United Nations System Common Principles on Future Generations*. https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Advance%20Unedited%20-%20United%20Nations%20System%20Common%20Principles%20on%20Future%20Generations_0.pdf

circular economy. It also champions the development of sustainable industries and resilient infrastructure, promotes equitable access to product information and clean technologies, and encourages increased investment in pollution prevention and control measures.

By focusing on "Inclusive and sustainable growth" the Common Approach to Pollution seeks to drive an equitable and environmentally-sound economic transformation, paving the way for a just and prosperous society that benefits all.

C. Objectives and outcomes

30. The Common Approach to Pollution presents 11 medium-term objectives and 30 outcomes. Objectives are to be pursued by the UN System in partnership with States, private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, other actors, and all people. The UN System and these partners form the primary audience for these objectives and are responsible for their realization. The outcomes are the intended results of efforts made by the UN System. These outcomes will emerge from the System's internal activities and through the support it extends to States and other stakeholders.
31. **Objective 1. Respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.**⁵⁹ Pollution is a global threat to human rights, including the right to a healthy environment, life, health, food, water and sanitation, development and housing. A safe climate,⁶⁰ access to safe water and adequate sanitation, clean air, soil and water, healthy, nutritious and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments in which people live, work, study and play, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, participation in decision-making, access to information and access to justice and remedies in environmental matters are all recognized as key elements of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.⁶¹ The right to a healthy environment ensures inclusive and informed decision-making aligned with scientific evidence and the needs of people in vulnerable

⁵⁹ UNGA (2022). *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment: resolution 76/300*. <http://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3983329> and UNGA (2021). *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment: resolution 48/13*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/289/50/PDF/G2128950.pdf?OpenElement>

⁶⁰ Article 2 of the UNFCCC: *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* (1992) Bonn. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

⁶¹ OHCHR, UNEP, UNDP. (2023). *What is the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment?* Geneva. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/information-materials/2023-01-06/r2heinfofinalweb.pdf>, UNGA (2019). *Right to a Healthy Environment: Good Practices - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Issue of Human Rights Obligations Relating to the Enjoyment of a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/355/14/PDF/G1935514.pdf?OpenElement>

situations. It also requires international cooperation, solidarity and equity in environmental action, including resource mobilization, as well as recognition of extraterritorial jurisdiction over human rights harms caused by environmental degradation, including pollution.⁶² Achieving environmental justice both within and among nations calls for the implementation of effective measures to address the disproportionate risk and impact of pollution on marginalized communities, who bear the least responsibility and have limited resources. Furthermore, the protection of environmental human rights defenders and activists is integral to upholding the right to a healthy environment. To uphold this right, anti-pollution initiatives must prioritize fairness, justice, and inclusivity. This approach fosters social trust and guarantees the equitable sharing of both the benefits and burdens associated with the prevention and reduction of pollution and its risks. Under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, businesses should identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address the adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved.⁶³ The 2022 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights analysed the impact of mining, oil and gas exploration and extraction, spraying of toxic pesticides, dumping of hazardous wastes, and military activities on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Rapporteur concluded that these threats affect every aspect of the life of Indigenous Peoples, including their bodies, lands, territories, resources, food, and natural ecosystems in which they live.⁶⁴

Outcome 1.1. The right of access to information about pollution and pollutants for all is promoted and supported. Adequate information about the risk and impact of pollution is largely inaccessible to many affected, in particular persons and groups in vulnerable situations. This is particularly so in trade, where information on the pollution footprint of production is often not conveyed to consumers or not presented in a manner that consumers can easily understand their implications. It is crucial for the UN System, in partnership with States, private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, and other actors to prioritize and support the availability of accurate information on the environmental and health impacts of pollution and on the causes of pollution. This information should be readily available, in an accessible format and appropriate context, to all, in particular consumers, workers and

⁶² OHCHR, UNEP, UNDP. (2023). *What is the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment?* Geneva. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/information-materials/2023-01-06/r2heinfofinalweb.pdf>

⁶³ OHCHR. (2012). *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. Geneva. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/reference-publications/guiding-principles-business-and-human-rights>

⁶⁴ Orellana, M. (2022). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Implications for Human Rights of the Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal of Hazardous Substances and Wastes: The Impact of Toxic Substances on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a77183-impact-toxic-substances-human-rights-indigenous-peoples-report>

other rights-holders with particular attention to the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations and people at risk.⁶⁵ The UN System could support States to take affirmative regulatory action to compel responsible third parties to generate the information necessary to understand the hazards and risks of exposure. Regulatory action could also make information accessible and ensure its effective use in decision-making.⁶⁶ Furthermore, collaborative initiatives should be undertaken to ensure public information campaigns supported by businesses are based on accurate and reliable assertions, enabling informed decision-making. This is critical to reducing exposure to hazardous substances in consumer products, at the workplace, in their homes and communities, or via food, water, air or other sources and to seek remedy when they suffer harm from such exposure.⁶⁷

Outcome 1.2. The meaningful and informed participation of all in decision-making processes addressing pollution is enhanced. Under international environmental law and human rights law, all people have the right to meaningful and informed participation including in decision-making relevant to the environment. This also makes for more effective policy. UN System, in collaboration with States, private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, other actors, and all people, should promote the informed participation of affected persons when actions and decision related to pollution are being taken. This also includes mechanisms for rights-holders to participate and channel their concerns and promote measures to ensure that outcomes are reflected in the final decisions. To adequately address the risk of pollution, a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach is required. Drawing on the diverse interests, needs and expertise of all groups, it offers important insights for inclusive and sustainable environmental action, enhancing the quality and implementation of decisions concerning the environment and human rights. Additionally, it is crucial to protect environmental human rights defenders within the UN System and beyond from any reprisals, threats, harassment, violence, or criminalization for exercising their rights and

⁶⁵ States should publicly share resources, scientific knowledge and technology in order to address the impacts pollution has on the enjoyment of human rights and guarantee all persons the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications (ICESCR Article 15). States should use sound science to regulate pollution and support the development and dissemination of safe alternatives ensuring all persons the right to benefit from them.

⁶⁶ Also see UNEP, OHCHR (2021). *Human Rights and Hazardous Substances – Key Messages*. Geneva. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/materials/KMHazardousSubstances25febLight.pdf>

⁶⁷ Information on how to safely use a specific product with health risk is equally important. It is also important to ensure products placed in markets under green labels do not further contribute to pollution.

freedom of expression. Action must be taken to create an enabling environment for environmental human rights defenders.

Outcome 1.3. Accountability and access to effective remedies for harm caused by pollution are increased. Under international human rights law, States, in partnership with the UN System, private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, other actors, and all people are required to guarantee effective remedies for human rights violations. In the event that pollution-related harms do occur, collaborative actions should be taken to ensure accountability and access to justice and effective remedies, including judicial and other redress mechanisms, sanctions, administrative fines and action, and civil liability. Guarantees of non-repetition are also a form of remedy (i.e., prevention of exposure at both individual and population levels). Furthermore, collaborative efforts should be made to support effective measures to hold polluters accountable – in operational, legal and financial terms – for the damage caused; support environmental remediation; and safeguard access to effective remedies for those harmed, including in cross-border cases. With regard to the issue of standing, although it remains within the jurisdiction of each State to determine the right of physical and legal persons to seek administrative and judicial redress, due consideration should be given to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been lawfully established under national legislation and are dedicated to promoting environmental protection. These organizations should be recognized as having a legitimate interest or being adversely affected in their rights, thus deserving the right to seek standing before both judicial and administrative mechanisms. Adopting such an approach can significantly enhance accountability and improve access to effective remedies for the damages caused by pollution to both environment and human health.

32. Objective 2. Generate and make available to all knowledge, data and information on pollution to enable risk-informed decisions and actions. The existing evidence of the physical, social, environmental, and economic cost of pollution already provides a clear-cut case for immediate action. However, a more comprehensive understanding of pollution sources, types and impacts, status and trends, and activities and responses, is required. This will enable evidence-based decision-making at global to subnational levels and engage a broader range of sectors and groups in developing solutions. These solutions should be affordable and cost-effective, socially just, and environmentally sound. It is important to prioritize these solutions and advocate for their adoption, enforcement, and accountability.

Access to pollution-related knowledge, data and information has improved alongside advancements in information technology and digital transformation. However, important gaps remain with regard to transparency, corporate political engagement, and how information is compiled, presented and monitored within and across sectors. There is also increasing evidence that pollution in combination with climate change is expanding risks of disasters, such as flooding, but the extent is not yet well understood. Knowledge, data and information on pollution is indispensable for accelerating action to prevent, mitigate and address the risks and impacts of environmental degradation, including pollution; to increase human well-being; and to promote innovation in a circular economy.

Outcome 2.1. Data and knowledge generation, availability and accessibility are enhanced, while progress towards a pollution-free planet is measured. All people have the right to access information about pollution. Easy access to accurate and up-to-date pollution data, information, and tools is also essential for other stakeholders, such as policymakers, and businesses. By improving the availability and accessibility of pollution-related data, individuals and organizations are empowered to make risk-informed decisions and take appropriate actions. To ensure informed decision-making and effective actions against pollution, it is crucial to generate reliable and disaggregated data and enhance knowledge in this field. By addressing knowledge gaps through improved data collection, the understanding of pollution trends, patterns, and risks as well as the effectiveness of pollution prevention and reduction measures can be enhanced. A comprehensive data collection system and repository should be established to capture pollution data and indicators from various sources and potential circular economy opportunities. Data should be disaggregated to provide heightened protection to those that are in vulnerable situations from pollution.⁶⁸ This also requires monitoring pollution levels, identifying pollution sources, and tracking the impacts on human health, ecosystems, and the environment, as well as potential relevant socioeconomic opportunities that can materialize through a circular economy. UN entities can work towards the achievement of this outcome by collaborating with States and relevant stakeholders though, e.g., establishing global partnerships for data and knowledge sharing. These partnerships can facilitate the exchange of expertise, resources, and

⁶⁸ Examples of UN initiatives on data generation are the: PRTR.net. (n.d.). *Welcome to PRTR.net*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://prtr.unece.org/>; UNEP. (n.d.). *Global Partnership on Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.gpmarinelitter.org/>, and the UN Department of economic and social affairs statistics division. (2014). See Implementation Guide – Paper prepared by UNSD. New York. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings/ninth_meeting/UNCEEA-9-6d.pdf

technologies, enabling the development of standardized methodologies for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Outcome 2.2. Science-based, evidence-based, risk-informed decision-making is promoted. Sound decisions on pollution prevention and reduction require evidence-based and risk-informed approaches. By utilizing reliable data and knowledge, decision-makers can assess the effectiveness of existing policies and interventions, identify gaps, and develop informed strategies. Promoting evidence-based and risk-informed decision-making involves integrating scientific research, expert knowledge, and stakeholder inputs. It also requires an iterative process that allows for continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement of pollution management approaches based on emerging evidence and changing circumstances. UN entities can support capacity-building efforts to enhance the technical skills and capabilities of national institutions in utilizing pollution-related data effectively.

Outcome 2.3. Opportunities provided by digital transformation are harnessed. In the era of digital transformation, there are unprecedented opportunities to leverage technological advancements for addressing pollution. Through their expertise and partnerships, UN entities can support the development of robust, digital infrastructure and networks that enable effective data collection, analysis, and sharing. They can also promote the adoption and utilization of emerging technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) devices and Big Data analytics to monitor pollution levels, detect pollution sources, and assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Furthermore, UN entities can facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity-building initiatives that empower States and stakeholders to embrace digital solutions for pollution prevention and reduction by harnessing the benefits and advantages offered by new digital technologies. Additionally, digital tools and platforms can facilitate the integration of information and communication, enabling open access to data and knowledge. Country context should be considered when promoting the implementation of new technological advances to ensure their correct application and reliability.⁶⁹ By utilizing these digital opportunities, collaboration,

⁶⁹ A World Bank report found that satellite-derived estimations of PM2.5 in lower middle-income countries (LMICs) are not reliable, and thus, should not be considered as a replacement for properly run and maintained ground-level monitoring networks in LMICs. The report shows that ground-level monitoring and satellite data are best if used as complements between each other. Access the report here: World Bank. (2022). *Getting Down to Earth: Are Satellites Reliable for Measuring Air Pollutants That Cause Mortality in Low- and Middle-Income Countries?*. International Development in Focus;. © Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/36804>

innovation and the sharing of best practices in pollution prevention and reduction, efforts can be enhanced.

33. Objective 3. Develop and implement policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, strategies, plans and actions, addressing all types and sources of pollution, including promoting circular economy opportunities at the international, regional, national, subnational and local level. Legislative and regulatory frameworks, strategies, plans and actions are necessary to prevent, manage and remediate pollution across all sectors, and incentives to catalyse the growth of circular economy. They should be required to manage risks and reduce their pollution footprint through, for instance, best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practices (BEP), and to fulfil their responsibilities to prevent harm. With the aim of preventing, and where not possible, halting or minimizing harm; reversing pollution, and creating sustainable economic models, institutions can benefit from support to operationalize strengthened systems within and across all sectors. In particular, these are, the agrifood systems, extractives/mining sector, building and construction, and other industries, transport, energy, manufacturing, services, and waste.⁷⁰ A multidisciplinary approach is needed to promote a shift from minimizing the harm from polluting activities towards proactive support for a circular economy, green economy, decent jobs, ecosystem resilience and the reduction of disaster risks. The decisions of the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) and the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the pollution-related treaties⁷¹ require robust systems for planning and implementation at the national level, convening multi-stakeholder processes and brokering cross-sectoral and multi-institutional cooperation and partnerships, and creating policy frameworks.⁷² UN entities can collectively and through individual mandates contribute to their implementation.

Outcome 3.1. The sound and integrated management of chemicals and waste is achieved throughout their life cycle in an integrated manner, in accordance with international frameworks, and through the leveraging of the role of the public and private sectors and engagement of all sectors of development. Agreement on international standards prevents the race to the bottom, whereby the State with the least stringent legislation and pollution standards attracts more investment. UN entities can

⁷⁰ UNEP (2017). *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*. Nairobi.

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/21213/Towards_a_pollution_free_planet_advance%20version.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

⁷¹ An assessment of pollution-related treaties was undertaken. See table 5 from EMG report: EMG (2023). *An Overview of UN Activities and Initiatives Related to Pollution*. Geneva. <https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/20.02.23-Mapping-Efforts-Pollution.pdf>

⁷² Also see Objective 4

promote the implementation of international frameworks by actively engaging with multiple stakeholders, including States, the private sector, civil society, the scientific and academic community, and other relevant actors. By leveraging their convening power and expertise, UN entities could facilitate partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders to transform economic sectors and promote responsible, risk-informed and environmentally sound practices in the management of chemicals and waste. This includes advocating for the adoption of green and sustainable chemistry and technologies, and incentives for a circular economy. Furthermore, UN entities could support capacity-building initiatives, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices to facilitate stakeholders to contribute to preventing and reducing pollution. UN entities could also advance the realization of desired outcomes outlined in international frameworks, including MEAs and the outcome of the fifth session of the International Conference for Chemicals Management (ICCM5) - Bonn, Germany, 25 - 29 September 2023 on the Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 process.

Outcome 3.2. Policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, including protocols and incentives, are compliant with human rights obligations and informed by health, environmental, and social standards. UN entities could provide assistance to States in the establishment of health, environmental, and social standards to prevent and reduce pollution. These standards can be leveraged to inform policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, prioritizing the well-being of individuals and the environment. For example, procurement standards and policies, especially of public institutions, are key to reducing pollution. UN entities could provide technical expertise and guidance to States in integrating these standards into their national policies and legislation related to pollution control.

Outcome 3.3. Policies and legislations, including incentives addressing pollution are implemented, enforced, and complied with strengthening capacities. Enhancing capacities is vital for the successful implementation of policies and legislation addressing pollution. UN entities could provide technical assistance, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building programmes to support States in enhancing their capabilities with the necessary tools, resources, and expertise to implement pollution prevention and reduction measures. This support should be in alignment with MEAs, trade agreements, regulatory frameworks, and programmes addressing all types and sources of pollution. By integrating these measures into local, subnational, national, and regional development strategies, UN

entities promote better prevention, mitigation, and management of pollution and related risks. Through this, UN entities also foster improved environmental outcomes and sustainable development. Enhancing enforcement and compliance with legislation is critical in addressing pollution efficiently. This involves strengthening institutional capacities of environment policy and inspection authorities, police, customs, and judiciary to identify, investigate, prosecute, and hold accountable those responsible for violations at the national and international levels. Through the robust enforcement and compliance mechanisms, effectiveness of pollution-related laws and regulations is ensured.

34. Objective 4. Increase systematic use of cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches to health, notably One Health approach,⁷³ to address pollution. A multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach is needed. This includes inter alia, governments and policymakers, public health agencies, environmental agencies and regulatory bodies, veterinary and animal health authorities, disaster/crisis management authorities, academic and research institutions, environmental and conservation organizations, civil society organizations, private and finance sector entities, community organizations and the broader public. The objective is to facilitate multi-stakeholder commitment across sectoral boundaries and multiple levels of cooperation on One Health. This is to accelerate progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the implementation of other relevant international agreements and instruments. The One Health approach aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are interdependent. By interlinking the health of humans, animals and the environment, the One Health approach addresses the full spectrum of health outcomes associated with environmental risk factors and contributes to global health security and upholds the human right to health. The approach can be applied at all levels and relies on effective governance, communication, collaboration, and coordination. Adopting a One Health approach helps to better understand the co-benefits, risks, and trade-offs, and design and implement more robust, equitable and holistic solutions associated with health.

Outcome 4.1. Linkages between pollution, health, human rights and other societal priorities, such as climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, food security and nutrition, and universal health coverage and primary health care, are

⁷³ FAO, UNEP, WHO and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). (2021). Joint Tripartite (FAO, OIE, WHO) and UNEP Statement Tripartite and UNEP support OHHLEP's definition of "One Health". <https://www.fao.org/3/cb7869en/cb7869en.pdf>

understood and taken into account in policy and management. By acting upon the linkages between pollution, health, climate change, biodiversity, disaster risks, and socio-economic issues, the Common Approach to Pollution ensures that policies, strategies, and initiatives address multiple dimensions simultaneously, leading to more integrated and effective solutions. This holistic approach facilitates cross-sectoral collaborations, fostering a coordinated and targeted response to pollution challenges. UN entities can contribute to this outcome by providing capacity-building and technical assistance to States and stakeholders, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, promoting research and knowledge sharing, and engaging in advocacy and communication efforts. Furthermore, UN entities can promote research and knowledge sharing to deepen the understanding of interlinkages between pollution and other societal priorities and ensure policy coherence is promoted at the UN level. The UN System could facilitate dialogue, and support monitoring and evaluation frameworks that address the interconnected challenges of pollution, health, and other societal priorities in a holistic manner and advance sustainable development.

Outcome 4.2. The application of the One Health approach is expanded to encompass pollution prevention and reduction. The One Health approach has not frequently or systematically been applied to pollution prevention and reduction⁷⁴ or to chemicals, waste and wastewater management. UN entities could promote and advocate for the integration of pollution prevention and reduction within the framework of the One Health approach. This includes recognizing the impact of pollution on human health, wildlife, ecosystems, and the overall interconnectedness of environmental and public health. This involves providing technical assistance, knowledge sharing platforms, and training programmes to States, professionals, and relevant stakeholders. By raising awareness and fostering collaboration among different sectors, such as health, environment, and waste management, UN entities could facilitate the incorporation of pollution prevention and reduction strategies within the One Health approach. This could foster comprehensive and integrated solutions that address pollution in a holistic manner.

35. Objective 5. Protect vulnerable ecosystems and restore ecosystems damaged by pollution, while adequately managing ecosystems for pollution prevention and reduction. Prevention and reduction of pollution and related risks contribute to healthy ecosystems and to a safe and stable climate. Healthy and productive ecosystems sustain

⁷⁴ With the possible exception of antimicrobial resistance in terrestrial or aquatic environments.

ecosystem services, such as carbon storage, pollination, nutrient cycling and water purification. Conservation and restoration of wetlands enhance their services of sediment trapping, nutrient removal and chemical detoxification, for example.⁷⁵ Restoration initiatives include cleaning of highly polluted river basins, soil reclamation in industrial areas, and de-eutrophication of waters. As pollution is often transboundary and emanating from multiple sources, the UN System can enhance impact by combining efforts. Priority should be given to the highly biodiverse and most vulnerable ecosystems, and those critical to the livelihoods of people to avoid further losses of ecosystem services driven by pollution and related risks. Sound science, including traditional and/or Indigenous knowledge, needs to be fully incorporated into finding solutions to address pollution in ecosystems. The observation of shifts in the composition of species can serve as an indicator of pollution, providing early warning and helping to monitor changes in pollution levels.

Outcome 5.1. Measures to protect, conserve, manage and restore ecosystems to prevent and reduce pollution and enhance ecosystem resilience are developed and implemented. From chemicals in water bodies to plastic pollution in the ocean, pollution levels are on the rise across all ecosystems. Discharge of pollutants into the natural environment needs to be controlled and minimized by the adoption of circular economy and zero waste policies. Implementing strict regulation of certain human activities in highly vulnerable ecosystems, establishing protected areas, treating emission and discharges, and reducing the exposure of sensitive flora and fauna to pollutants are additional measures. Coherent and impactful action will ensure that ecosystems continue to deliver services, such as clean water, land and air and carbon sequestration, as well as support livelihoods of millions of people dependent on them. Through their coordination, advocacy, and support, UN entities can facilitate the establishment of robust regulatory frameworks, promote sustainable practices, and provide technical assistance to States and stakeholders.

Outcome 5.2. Nature-based solutions are widely recognized as effective means for pollution prevention and reduction. Nature-based solutions harness the power of natural systems and processes to combat pollution. Examples include the phytoremediation of soil,⁷⁶ the filtration of polluted air by trees and shrubs, and the removal of excessive nutrients and pollutants by passing water flows through (artificial) wetlands.

⁷⁵ UNEA (2019). Implementation Plan *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet: resolution 21*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/K19/011/58/PDF/K1901158.pdf?OpenElement>

⁷⁶ FAO and UNEP (2021). *Global Assessment of Soil Pollution: Report*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4894en>

By raising awareness of nature-based solutions to combat pollution, UN entities could safeguard ecosystem functions and services and contribute to pollution prevention and reduction. This awareness-raising could lead to the adoption of sustainable practices by individuals, communities, and States, and support policies for environmental protection. To enhance the effectiveness of these efforts, it is important to seek synergy between the UN Common Approach on Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions⁷⁷ and the Common Approach to Pollution. By aligning and integrating the approaches, UN entities can create a unified framework that promotes the recognition, implementation, and scaling up of nature-based solutions as integral components of pollution-reduction strategies.

Outcome 5.3: Pollution prevention and reduction is mainstreamed into landscape and watershed management that takes into account the interconnectedness of resource uses and ecosystems and source-to-sea approach. UN entities can advocate for landscape and watershed management that values different resource uses and ecosystems and integrates pollution prevention and reduction effort. The application of the source-to-sea approach should be expanded to address pollution prevention and reduction by encouraging a holistic, integrated, and cross-sectoral management of land, water, and coastal resources. The root causes of pollution may not be within the primary intervention site and pollution prevention and reduction require multi-stakeholder interventions to identify, negotiate and implement actions.⁷⁸ This can be achieved by encouraging integrated management practices that acknowledge and harmonize the multiple roles and effects of resource uses and interaction of different ecosystems. This is between sectors and at different spatial scales, ensuring also that more fragile areas and buffer zones are given due attention and protection. UN entities can additionally facilitate education and training programmes to enhance local capacities for sustainable management of ecosystems and source-to-sea approach. By supporting research and development initiatives, UN entities can help identify innovative solutions to manage landscapes in a more sustainable and effective manner. Simultaneously, through their broad network of partners, they can mobilize the necessary resources and expertise to

⁷⁷ CEB. (2021). Common Approach to Integrating Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions for Sustainable Development into United Nations Policy and Programme Planning and Delivery. https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/CEB_2021_1_Add.1%20%28Biodiversity%20Common%20Approach%29.pdf

⁷⁸FAO. (n.d.). *Climate Smart Agriculture Sourcebook*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/concept/module-a3-landscapes/chapter-a3-1/en/>

support countries in their efforts towards improved landscape and watershed management and source-to-sea approach,⁷⁹ thereby contributing to the overall health of ecosystems.

36. Objective 6. Transform high-impact sectors for a pollution-free planet throughout value chains. Pollution prevention and reduction requires focus on the high-impact sectors and their value chains in international trade. Among sectors of concern are agrifood systems (crop and animal production; forestry, fisheries and aquaculture; non-food agricultural products), extractives/mining sector, building and construction; and other industries (chemicals, forestry and paper products). Sectors of concern also include transport (automobiles, fuel use and supply, engine emissions, road, tyres, surface, shipping, aviation, and urban mobility), energy (combustion, plants, fossil fuels, biomass, and nuclear), and manufacturing (information technology, textiles, apparel, tanneries, footwear, luxury goods, pharmaceuticals, and batteries). Additional sectors of concern comprise services (retail, hospitality and tourism, hospitals and health care services, sanitation, and wastewater), and waste (municipal solid waste, industrial waste, hazardous waste, microplastics, plastic waste, and wastewater).⁸⁰ Robust assessments and costing are vital for understanding sector-specific pollution impacts. Promoting sustainable value chains from production to consumption fosters social justice and shared responsibilities. Less polluting value chains will not necessarily translate into immediate profits, but will distribute economic benefits, such as resource efficiency, competitiveness, and green business opportunities more fairly.⁸¹ Cost-effective, targeted interventions to prevent and eliminate use and leakage of harmful substances should be adopted throughout value chains, with support of modern technologies. Frameworks that enhance and reinforce transparency and accountability by the business sector should be promoted. It is also important to ensure a just transition for persons, groups and peoples in vulnerable situations. The transition could require acting beyond sectoral boundaries to address the main drivers of unsustainable production and consumption practices.

Outcome 6.1. Multi-stakeholder action for pollution prevention and reduction is accelerated in high-impact sectors. UN entities can convene and support the establishment of multi-stakeholder forums and initiatives, where key players in high-impact sectors come together and collaborate to accelerate the change towards achieving clear and ambitious pollution prevention goals and targets. The key players include States,

⁷⁹ For example, all regional seas conventions and action plans, despite differing mandates, promote and support countries in implementing source-to-sea approach in many concrete ways – through science, data and assessments, knowledge management and digitalization, promoting integrated policies and their implementation.

⁸⁰ This list has been compiled based on UNEP, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet Report: Background Report*, and inputs from the member agencies of the EMG.

⁸¹ OECD. (n.d.). *Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technology*. <https://www.oecd.org/daf/blockchain/>

private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, informal sector, youth, international organizations, other actors, and all people. Through the platforms, UN entities can encourage and facilitate the integration of pollution prevention and reduction actions into business models and practices, ensuring adherence to the highest standards. By working together, with knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices, UN entities enable transformative change, innovation, and the adoption of sustainable practices that effectively reduce pollution in the respective sectors.⁸²

Outcome 6.2. Less polluting trade is promoted. International trade and trade policy should support environmental goals and promote more sustainable production and consumption, given the importance of a just transition and progress towards achieving the SDGs.⁸³ UN entities can lead efforts to develop and establish international standards that prioritize environmental goals and encourage more sustainable production and consumption patterns. This can also encompass the integration of voluntary standards, such as value chain certification and corporate mechanisms, to encourage and reward pollution-free practices. Sustainable and less polluting trade could be achieved by promoting sustainable trade practices, adopting information transparency across value chains, and providing technical assistance to States and other relevant stakeholders. Such trade could also be achieved by encouraging green public procurement; facilitating trade in environmental goods and services essential for pollution prevention and mitigation; fostering partnerships; implementing trade related requirements of international environmental agreements; and monitoring and reporting. Furthermore, to promote the use of more sustainable products and to discourage the trade of pollution-inducing items, it is important to ensure that import tariffs applied by countries promote the use of more sustainable products and discourage trade of pollution-inducers. This coherence in import tariffs should extend beyond fossil fuels and agriculture to encompass other sectors and products that significantly contribute to pollution, including single-use plastic items.

⁸² Some examples of such multi-stakeholder forums and platforms in the area of pollution prevention and reduction include: Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC); New Plastics Economy Global Commitment; the Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance (LEAP) Partnership; the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion; Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GlobalABC); the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE); the Health and Energy Platform for Action (HEPA); the Global Partnership of Nutrient Management (GPNM); the Global Fuel Economy Initiative (GFEI); the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves; the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP); the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (Lead Paint Alliance); the Global Partnership on Waste Management (GPWM); the Global Battery Alliance (GBA).

⁸³ World Trade Organization (WTO) (2021). *Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD) - Ministerial Statement on Trade and Environmental Sustainability, Revision*. Geneva. <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:WT/MIN21/6R2.pdf&Open=True>

Outcome 6.3. Harmful subsidies are removed, subsidies are repurposed, and incentives provided for pollution prevention and reduction action. UN entities can provide technical assistance and guidance to support States in providing targeted incentives and redirecting subsidies from polluting industries, including but not limited to fossil fuels, plastic polymers, fisheries, and agriculture. Redirected subsidies can support industries that promote sustainability. By incentivizing the reduction of pollution and the adoption of cleaner practices, the growth of sustainable industries can be fostered. For instance, subsidies currently allocated to the fossil fuel industry could be phased out and redirected towards other priorities, including social programmes.^{84,85} For example, repurposing subsidies from the fossil fuel industry to support the development of renewable energy sources would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote the transition to a low-carbon economy. Similarly, harmful agricultural subsidies could be redirected from polluting activities to those promoting sustainable land use practices, thereby reducing soil and water pollution.^{86,87}

37. Objective 7. Identify, promote, and implement safer and cleaner alternatives and sustainable and resilient infrastructure development. Pollution prevention and reduction necessitate innovative thinking, technological advancements; and addressing factors, such as poor maintenance and lack of infrastructure resilience. These factors, along with limited existing infrastructure, especially in developing countries, contribute significantly to the current global pollution crisis. Circular approaches to minimizing waste must be coupled, especially in the short term, with mandatory waste collection, segregation, and sound disposal systems, along with support for servicing and maintaining waste infrastructure.⁸⁸ Technology development and transfer, and nature-based solutions,⁸⁹ as applicable, are needed.⁹⁰ Effectively regulated public-private partnerships can play an important role in deploying

⁸⁴UNDP (2021). *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform: Lessons and Opportunities*. New York. <https://www.undp.org/publications/fossil-fuel-subsidy-reform-lessons-and-opportunities>

⁸⁵ Enriquez S., Larsen B. and Sánchez-Triana E. (2018). *Energy Subsidy Reform Assessment Framework: Local Environmental Externalities Due to Energy Price Subsidies — A Focus on Air Pollution and Health*. © World Bank, ESMAP. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/30258>

⁸⁶ FAO, UNDP and UNEP (2021). *A Multi-Billion-Dollar Opportunity – Repurposing Agricultural Support to Transform Food Systems*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6562en>

⁸⁷ Enriquez S., Larsen B. and Sánchez-Triana E. (2018). *Energy Subsidy Reform Assessment Framework: Local Environmental Externalities Due to Energy Price Subsidies — A Focus on Air Pollution and Health*. © World Bank, ESMAP. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/30258>

⁸⁸ Enríquez, S., Sánchez-Triana, E. and Lopez, M.G. (2020). Economic instruments and financial mechanisms for the adoption of a circular economy. *An Introduction to Circular Economy*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Economic-Instruments-and-Financial-Mechanisms-for-a-Enr%C3%ADquez-S%C3%A1nchez-Triana/fd39af229d68b805f91b4de5657f99a3a1b92a92>

⁸⁹ See also Objective 10

⁹⁰ UNEP (2017). *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*. Nairobi. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/21213/Towards_a_pollution_free_planet_advance%20version.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

innovative solutions. Such partnerships should equitably distribute risks and benefits, and address issues of affordability, local production and skilled labour in connection with the uptake of clean technologies and innovations.

Outcome 7.1. Availability and use of safer alternatives are increased. Resource-intensive production systems should be transformed to create better outcomes for people and planet. UN entities can advocate for sustainable economic development by promoting circular economy,⁹¹ sustainable and circular bioeconomy,⁹² and green economy.⁹³ The consideration of safer alternatives and standards, along with the comprehensive assessment and systematic implementation of impact assessments, and health, environmental, and social safeguards should be established within government and private sector processes, as an integral part of corporate responsibility measures. UN entities can help promote safer and cleaner production, the deployment of life cycle management approaches and help States implement policies that encourage production using sustainable and safe(r) alternatives. Greater efforts, however, are required to responsibly engage the private sector.

Outcome 7.2. Infrastructure for pollution prevention and reduction is promoted and strengthened. Addressing specific infrastructure requirements to prevent pollution, particularly those for waste management and wastewater treatment, is imperative, especially in developing countries. UN entities should collaborate with States and stakeholders to identify specific infrastructure needs and develop targeted interventions that address pollution challenges in these areas.⁹⁴ By providing technical expertise, financial support, and capacity-building initiatives, UN entities can help strengthen the resilience of infrastructure to prevent the risk of pollution from poor maintenance, climate-related hazards and other risks, particularly in regions where urgent action is needed. UN entities can provide guidance and support to States and relevant stakeholders, encouraging the application of sustainability criteria for infrastructure in decision-making processes. This applies to various entities, including governmental bodies, private sector, and other stakeholders. To support the implementation of effective infrastructure, UN

⁹¹ UNEP. (n.d.). *Circularity*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.unep.org/circularity>

⁹² FAO. (n.d.). *Sustainable and Circular Bioeconomy for Food Systems Transformation*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.fao.org/in-action/sustainable-and-circular-bioeconomy/en/>

⁹³ UNEP. (n.d.). *Green Economy*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.unep.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/supporting-resource-efficiency/green-economy>

⁹⁴In 2020, EMG established the Consultative Process on Sustainable Infrastructure to support this area: EMG. (n.d.). *Sustainable Infrastructure – Consultative Process on Sustainable Infrastructure*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://unemg.org/sustainable-infrastructure/>

entities can advocate for the provision of financial incentives, such as tax credits, breaks or grants, along with technical assistance and capacity-building.

Outcome 7.3. Infrastructure resilience is strengthened to prevent and manage pollution risks. Infrastructure systems can have negative impacts on the environment and significantly alter the likelihood and magnitude of hazard events, such as pollution. To address this, UN entities can promote careful planning, design, and management of infrastructure with a strong focus on resilience. By incorporating resilience considerations into infrastructure projects, such as water management systems, transportation networks, and industrial facilities, ecosystems can be protected, and environmental impacts minimized. This proactive approach helps prevent pollution and reduces associated risks. Furthermore, UN entities can encourage the adoption of early detection systems and the implementation of effective preventive measures to mitigate pollution risks. This includes measures to prevent leakages, bursts, or other forms of damage to infrastructure. By promoting infrastructure resilience,⁹⁵ UN entities can support the development and implementation of strategies and technologies that enhance overall resilience of infrastructure systems and reduce the likelihood of pollution incidents.

38. Objective 8. Identify, incentivize, and mobilize predictable and sustainable financial resources for pollution-free action and risk reduction. Pollution poses significant costs to society in terms of productivity losses, health care costs and ecosystem damages. Most of these costs are unaccounted for and unacknowledged. Better understanding of the staggering economic and non-economic costs of pollution could inform evidence-based decision-making and support efficient policies. Although cleaner technologies and alternatives exist, their deployment in locations and sectors often requires more financing. Initiatives such as, including repurposing harmful subsidies, efficient tax policies, regulations, and incentives could increase private investment in green and blue economic strategies. This would, consequently, create decent job opportunities and strengthen planetary stability. Mobilizing public and private resources at national and international levels could advance financing resilience in the early years of a longer-term transformation of the economy.

Outcome 8.1. Pollution externalities are better accounted for through economic analysis and tools to redirect investments to less-polluting economic activities.

⁹⁵ UNDRR (2022). *Principles for Resilient Infrastructure*. Geneva. <https://www.undrr.org/media/78694/download?startDownload=true>

Transformative change is required in the analytical and predictive models employed by economists to comprehend and forecast economic behaviour and variables. This shift calls for integrating environmental factors and externalities, and ensuring costs of pollution are better accounted for by polluters. The shift further calls for reflecting on societal, health, and environmental benefits derived from pollution prevention and reduction measures in market prices. The UN System can shape the discourse around financial flows in the form of public expenditure, comprising subsidies, capital investments or line budgets; and private sector finance, comprising private investment, banking, loans or insurance. Thereby, preventing or accounting for the negative impacts on nature, and simultaneously increasing the flow of finance for nature-positive investments.

Outcome 8.2. Access to financing for pollution prevention and reduction is increased, including development aid in particular, by realizing co-benefits across environmental and development priorities. Financial investments should be increased for less-polluting industries and activities by re-directing financial investments away from polluting industries, such as transportation, agriculture, and inadequate waste management. Providing adequate finance to manage public goods and natural sources of air pollution, such as resuspended dust, should be encouraged. Moreover, it is recommended to encourage multilateral development banks to include pollution prevention as a priority area. Financial incentives to facilitate regional approaches to transboundary or regional externalities should be provided. Stakeholders should be engaged to build a common agreement on the use of these resources to support interventions addressing pollution beyond national boundaries. Measures such as cash guarantees, training, and business models strengthening financial and economic viability of pollution-reduction initiatives should be prioritized. This would increase investment by commercial financiers for pollution-reducing enterprises. UN entities should facilitate country access to resources to implement pollution prevention and reduction measures, through existing multilateral mechanisms and joint programmes. UN entities should also work with banks, insurers, investors and key financial players. Both public and private finance and investments should be considered to accelerate green, just and inclusive socioeconomic transitions. The transition should include both informal and formal economy. Multilateral development banks should be encouraged to include pollution prevention and reduction as a priority area. Prioritizing a pollution-free planet has shared benefits for climate, biodiversity, health, food security and nutrition, the economy, and the broader achievement of the SDGs. The shared benefits could be realized by providing

adequate financing for mitigating emissions of short-lived climate pollutants, particularly black carbon and methane – potent climate warmers that contribute significantly to air pollution.⁹⁶ Additional initiatives include reforming energy and agricultural subsidies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; allocating resources to pollution and climate mitigation activities; and using financial resources to build synergies between pollution management and climate change mitigation initiatives. Supporting investments to reduce emissions from sources that emit air pollution and greenhouse gases, and aligning air quality management and decarbonization strategies could pose as additional initiatives.

Outcome 8.3. Industries are incentivized to follow the polluter pays principle and to internalize the costs of pollution. Through advocacy efforts, UN entities can encourage Member States to implement policies that incentivize sustainable practices and discourage pollution. Economic incentives can make industry, agriculture, transportation, providers of waste management services, and other key sources of pollution switch to less polluting practices or stop them altogether. Economic incentives, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and grants can be provided to industries that adopt cleaner technologies and practices, making it economically beneficial for them to reduce pollution. Furthermore, UN entities can support incentives, including recognition programmes, certification schemes, and market-based mechanisms that reward sustainable behaviour and penalize pollution. By encouraging the internalization of pollution costs, UN entities could make industries account for the environmental and social impacts of their activities. Moreover, UN entities can provide technical assistance, capacity-building support, and guidance to Member States in implementing mechanisms that hold industries accountable for the costs associated with pollution.

39. Objective 9. Raise global awareness about adverse impacts of pollution and the role of consumers in driving sustainable consumption and production, so as to inform and inspire action. In terms of sustainability, consumption can be categorized into three types: Underconsumption – does not meet basic human needs; overconsumption – perceived as wasteful with deep-rooted inequity; and aspirational consumption – seen as “meaningful, productive and fulfilling”.⁹⁷ By steering policies and behaviours towards aspirational consumption, the latter has the potential to be an instrument of positive shift towards a

⁹⁶ Sanchez-Triana, E. (2023). Integrating air quality management and climate Change Mitigation: Achieving Ambitious Climate Action by Cleaning the Air We Breathe. World Bank Group and Korea Greengrowth Trust Fund.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099033123181574723/pdf/P17078405f2576003080b0095b8cda440ee.pdf>

⁹⁷ UNEP and One Planet. (2023). Exploring “aspirational consumption” to drive systemic lifestyle changes.

https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/from-crm/Exploring_aspirational_consumption_OPN_0.pdf

pollution-free planet. All parts of society have a role to play in encouraging more responsible consumption. The prevention and reduction of pollution and related risks require changes in collective and individual mindsets, values, and behaviours, alongside changes in policies and regulations. With the global web of supply chains connecting demands in one country and affecting resources and lives in another, the importance of responsible and sustainable consumption has never been more urgent. Often aspirational messaging and advertising campaigns strengthen value chains that increase pollution, the competition for goods and services and further resource constraints for the poor and marginalized. Action led by the youth should be prioritized. Engaging youth further as agents of positive change can lead to long-term behavioural changes, build a sense of responsibility, and foster a commitment to reducing pollution. The UN System can effectively mobilize diverse stakeholders and resources to take ownership of pollution risks. Harnessing the work of existing coalitions and platforms, the UN System can promote global awareness of the importance of increasing resource efficiency and sustainable and responsible consumption and production.

Outcome 9.1. Awareness of the impact of pollution on human rights, health and a healthy environment, food security and nutrition, and the economy is raised through unified messaging and coordinated campaigns. The UN System can deliver unified communication campaigns to raise awareness on pollution in all its forms and on the negative impacts on human health, food security and nutrition, the environment and economy. Existing global communication and mobilization initiatives – for example, the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals,⁹⁸ the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration,⁹⁹ the United Nations Decade of Family Farming,¹⁰⁰ and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development¹⁰¹ ; and campaigns related to UN-recognized international day celebrations with a pollution focus¹⁰² – should be utilized to strengthen pollution action messaging to drive social, economic and governance transformations.

⁹⁸ UNSDG. (n.d.). Decade of Action. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>

⁹⁹ Decade on Restoration. (n.d.). Preventing, Halting and Reversing Loss of Nature - Take on the nature crisis. Play a game and learn how to restore. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>

¹⁰⁰ UNGA. (2017). Seventy-second session Second Committee, Agenda item 25, Agriculture development, food security and nutrition - United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028). Retrieved on July 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1318971>

¹⁰¹ Ocean Decade. (n.d.). *Ocean Decade* – The science we need for the ocean we want. Retrieved July 2023. <https://oceandecade.org/>

¹⁰² Among the International Days of particular importance towards a pollution-free planet: UN. (n.d.) *International Day of Zero Waste*. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/zero-waste-day> (30 March); UN. (n.d.). *International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies*. Retrieved July 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/clean-air-day> (7 September); WHO. (n.d.). *International Lead Poisoning Prevention*

Outcome 9.2. Increased demand for fair and just consumption resulting in adoption of sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, and responsible consumerism.

UN entities could advocate for increased societal and individual appreciation of and commitment to sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, influencing positively what decision-makers should prioritize. The *affordable* and the *sustainable* are viewed as aspirational and desirable, as against frugal or niche. UN entities can invest in building consumer capabilities to enable responsible consumer choices. They can promote the availability of product sustainability information through extended producer responsibility (EPR), labelling, product life extension, safe and clean alternatives, online information systems, and corporate reporting. By encouraging consumers to drive sustainability through the products they buy, and the way they (re)use, recycle or discard them, UN entities drive sustainability through consumer demand. The consumers' demand for the right to be sustainable should call for more public value in industrial strategies and policy.

40. **Objective 10. Prevent and reduce pollution risks and impacts associated with man-made and natural hazards, conflicts, and humanitarian response.** Man-made and natural hazards, such as severe storms, floods, wildfires, volcanoes, and earthquakes, can lead to widespread air, land and water pollution. Storm surges and flooding can cause waters to be contaminated through damage to water and sanitation infrastructure and services, industrial factories, chemical storage plants or oil refineries. Smoke from wildfires and dust from sand and dust storms contribute to large-scale transboundary air pollution. Pollution can occur during or after a disaster. It can also result from technological and biological hazards that emerge over time in the form of a slow-onset event. Moreover, pollution can aggravate conflict through resource competition, adverse health impacts, and environmental degradation. For instance, when pollution reduces the quantity or quality of resources, it can lead to resource competition among different groups, such as farmers, fisherfolk, and herders.¹⁰³ Pollution could also have significant health impacts, particularly on children. In areas where pollution is high, communities may become sick, leading to increased health care costs, decreased productivity, and economic hardship. These effects can lead to resentment and conflict. A conflict can arise between communities and States or corporations perceived to be responsible for pollution. Conflicts can occur between groups that rely on the environment for their livelihoods. Conflicts can cause widespread pollution. Enormous amounts of pollution

Week. <https://www.who.int/campaigns/international-lead-poisoning-prevention-week> (every year in October); WHO. (n.d.). *World Antimicrobial Awareness Week*. <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-antimicrobial-awareness-week> (every year in November).
¹⁰³ UN. (n.d.). *Thematic Review on Climate Security and Peacebuilding 2023*. <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/thematic-review-climate-security-and-peacebuilding-2023>.

and toxins are released through purposeful or accidental destruction of chemical plants and storage facilities, oil depots, coal mines, gas lines and other industrial sites. Conflicts in which landmines and other explosive remnants of war are utilized cause soil pollution, through leaching of toxic chemicals into the soil, thereby making agricultural land unusable and harming wildlife. Weapons used during conflict release toxic gases into the air and heavy metals into soil and water. Humanitarian operations, such as emergency response and refugee camps, could have significant environmental impacts as they can lead to an increased demand for water, resulting in contaminated water sources and sanitation services; and inadequate treatment of wastewater, faecal sludge and solid waste management. This can cause the spread of water-borne and vector-borne diseases, and further worsen the health of people in vulnerable situations. It is essential for the UN System to work together with States, private sector, business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, other actors, and the affected communities to reduce pollution impacts and related risks that result from and contribute to conflict, through prevention and peace building.¹⁰⁴

Outcome 10.1. Knowledge generation and exchange on the impact of pollution in protracted crisis and fragile settings is increased among and across the environmental, development and humanitarian communities. UN entities can foster effective partnerships and collaboration between environmental, development and humanitarian organizations to facilitate knowledge-sharing and cross-sector learning. This could involve joint research projects, exchange visits, joint training and capacity-building initiatives. Collaborative partnerships can also help to build trust and understanding between communities, leading to more effective and coordinated responses to pollution in protracted crisis and fragile settings. Conducting research on the impacts of pollution in the protracted crisis and fragile settings can help build a stronger evidence base and increase understanding of the issue. This could involve collecting data on pollution levels, monitoring health impacts of pollution or assessing the environmental impacts of humanitarian operations. UN entities can provide training and capacity-building opportunities for environmental, development and humanitarian practitioners. Such initiatives can enhance knowledge and understanding of pollution impacts, related risks and prevention and mitigation strategies. This could involve training on environmental

¹⁰⁴ The commitments in the *Climate and Environment Charter* (2021) offer a set of principles to guide humanitarian action in response to the climate and environmental crises – Climate Charter. (2021). *The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations*. <https://www.climate-charter.org/>

health, pollution monitoring and control, or disaster risk reduction, including with regards to anticipatory and early action. Capacity-building initiatives can also help to build networks and communities of practice, facilitating knowledge-sharing and cross-sectoral learning. Raising awareness about the issue of pollution in protracted crisis and fragile settings is crucial. UN entities can undertake communication and advocacy efforts to build public support and political will for action. This could involve launching public awareness campaigns, engaging with the media, or advocating for policy change at all levels, from global to subnational.

Outcome 10.2. Pollution prevention and reduction through emergency preparedness and early warning systems is integrated in disaster response, conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies. Integrating pollution reduction and prevention in conflict prevention and peacebuilding promotes sustainable development, peace and security. It also reduces the negative impacts and existing and potential risks of environmental degradation on communities affected by conflict. A multifaceted approach that addresses the causes of pollution, strengthens environmental and risk governance, promotes peace and security, and fosters collaboration and partnership between different stakeholders, including children and youth is required. UN entities can play a key role in facilitating this approach by supporting initiatives that address the drivers of pollution, such as promoting sustainable practices and encouraging the use of clean technologies in conflict-affected areas. Strengthening capacities of States to prevent, respond to and remediate conflict and disaster risks requires a comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach, involving government and society. Additionally, strengthening capacities of States for emergency preparedness, for early warning systems for pollution accidents, and for man-made and natural hazards requires a similar comprehensive approach.

This approach involves strengthening institutional capacity, raising public awareness, fostering partnerships among stakeholders, and capacity-building of national and local institutions. UN entities can provide technical assistance, training, and support to States and stakeholders in developing and implementing contingency plans, improving monitoring and reporting systems, and enhancing emergency preparedness and early warning systems for pollution accidents and other man-made and natural hazards.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ UNDRR. (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030*. Sendai. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

Outcome 10.3. Pollution associated with humanitarian response is reduced.

Disasters and conflicts, as well as relief and recovery operations, adversely impact and threaten human life, health, food security and nutrition, livelihoods, and security. Failure to address these risks can undermine the relief process, causing additional loss of life, human rights violations, displacement, aid dependency and increased vulnerability.¹⁰⁶ In line with the principle of “do no harm”, damage caused by pollutants must be avoided, minimized and managed, while providing timely and principled humanitarian assistance. This should go hand-in-hand with the objective to build back better through recovery actions, to achieve greater resilience and sustainability in the long term. Efficient chemicals and waste management policies must be implemented. The immediate and longer-term environmental impact of humanitarian operations, including programmes, procurement, logistics and premises, should be assessed.¹⁰⁷ The relationship between pollution and humanitarian response is twofold: pollution could trigger conflict and/or worsen a humanitarian crisis; and humanitarian response without due consideration for pollution impacts could adversely impact the environment.¹⁰⁸ UN entities help ensure environmental considerations, including pollution management, are embedded in humanitarian response efforts by systematically integrating pollution-related measures. By addressing pollution risks and minimizing environmental impacts, UN entities promote sustainable humanitarian actions that contribute positively to resilience building and conflict resolution.¹⁰⁹

41. Objective 11. Mainstream pollution prevention and reduction and maximize resource use efficiency in UN System operations and programming: Lead by example. The UN System should serve as an example and inspire States, private sector and business actors, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community, other actors, and all people worldwide to foster pollution prevention and reduction. The UN System is responsible for preventing and reducing pollution and maximizing resource use efficiency, in line with international agreements. The UN System should review its operations to ensure programmes and operations integrate pollution prevention and reduction solutions; and prevent or do not exacerbate pollution and its related risks. The Strategy for Sustainability

¹⁰⁶ OCHA, UN & UNEP. (n.d.). *Humanitarian Action and the Environment*. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/humanitarian-action-and-environment>

¹⁰⁷ Climate Charter. (2021). *The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations*. <https://www.climate-charter.org/>

¹⁰⁸ Sphere. (2018). *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. Geneva. <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Sphere-Handbook-2018-EN.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ Climate Charter. (2021). *The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations*. <https://www.climate-charter.org/>

Management in the UN System 2020–2030,¹¹⁰ Phase I: Environmental Sustainability in the Area of Management (henceforth the Sustainability Strategy I) and the Model Approach to Environmental and Social Standards in United Nations programming¹¹¹ (henceforth the Model Approach) are two documents that demonstrate the UN system-wide commitments on pollution prevention and resource efficiency in operations and programming.

Outcome 11.1. Environmental sustainability enhanced in the management of UN facilities and operations and championed by each agency, funds and programmes. The world needs more actions to reach the goal of a pollution-free planet. The UN System needs to implement greater environmental sustainability in the management of its facilities and operations, through accelerated implementation of Sustainability Strategy I. UNEP hosts the Sustainable United Nations (SUN) facility and manages the Issue Management Group (IMG) on Environmental Sustainability Management. IMG is a network of ‘Sustainability focal points’ designated by the UN entities’ member of the EMG. SUN also leads the UN System’s efforts to measure and reduce its environmental impacts. SUN’s current work is organized by four outputs: knowledge and policy co-creation, management, and networking (output 1); communication, reporting, and advocacy (output 2); data analytics, indicators, and 2050 Readiness (output 3); and greening through UN Reforms (output 4). The 2022 Greening the Blue Report¹¹² indicated that the UN System’s environmental footprint improved in the areas of environmental governance and environmental training in 2021. Ninety-seven per cent of the UN System reported the 2021 greenhouse gas emissions are offset, while 46 per cent of entities have environmental training available for staff, and 95 per cent of organizations included environmental considerations in procurement processes. Further effort is necessary to ensure that non-reporting entities start measuring and reporting their environmental performance. Further reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and water usage per personnel and total per facility is necessary. With regard to waste management, each entity and facility is to accelerate its shift to sound management practices and treatment options.

¹¹⁰ CEB. (2021). *Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030, phase 2*. <https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/CEB.2021.2.Add.1-Strategy%20for%20Sustainability%20Management%20in%20the%20United%20Nations.Phase%20II.pdf>

¹¹¹ EMG. (2019). *Moving Towards a Common Approach to Environmental and Social Standards for UN Programming*. Geneva. https://unemg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FINAL_Model_Approach_ES-Standards-1.pdf

¹¹² The report covered the 2021 environmental impacts of 307,000 personnel in 53 reporting entities across Headquarters, field offices and operations on the ground. Fifty-six entities comprise the Greening the Blue community including the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the first non-UN organization to join the community.

Outcome 11.2. Pollution prevention and reduction is effectively mainstreamed within the UN System and its entities in their programmatic work, as part of the system-wide effort for addressing environmental and social standards in programming. Thematic Area 8 of the Model Approach on “Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency” asks that the UN entities’ programming shall avoid and minimize adverse impacts on human health and the environment from pollution (including short and long-lived climate pollutants) and promote more sustainable and efficient use of resources, including energy, land and water. It further asks that UN entities avoid or minimize the generation of hazardous and non-hazardous wastes and promote safe, effective, environmentally sound pest management. According to the Model Approach’s Benchmark Standards for this thematic area, UN entities should accelerate the implementation of the measures concerning pollution prevention, wastes, hazardous materials, resource efficiency, water use and conservation, pesticide use and management, participation, access to information and accountability. Furthermore, UN entities shall conduct a periodic review of their environmental and social programming policies and procedures. This is in order to more readily identify areas of alignment and areas of potential gaps with the Model Approach, especially in the context of country programming of the UN entity.

V. Next Steps

42. The Common Approach to Pollution was endorsed at the 29th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the UN Environment Management Group (EMG), on 10 October 2023. The SOM agreed to establish an Issue Management Group (IMG) on Pollution to facilitate a coordinated approach to the implementation of the Common Approach. Additionally, the EMG Senior Officials urged UN entities to incorporate the Common Approach to Pollution in their respective frameworks, strategies and work programmes.
43. The IMG on Pollution will lead the preparation of an Implementation Plan, expanding on the work of the EMG Consultative Process on Pollution. The Plan will guide UN entities in integrating the Common Approach to Pollution within their respective programmes, and throw light on the design and delivery of their assistance strategies for Member States. The implementation modalities may include both system-wide efforts, engaging a sub-set of

agencies on issues of relevance, or preparation of an issue-specific UN offer of assistance.¹¹³

The Implementation Plan may include the following activities:

- a. Production and dissemination of joint knowledge products, advocacy, messages and communication about the Common Approach to Pollution.
 - b. Compilation of good practices and lessons learned from the UN agencies' progress with the Common Approach to Pollution. This is in line with the Common Approach to Integrating Biodiversity and Nature-based Solutions for Sustainable Development into United Nations Policy and Programme Planning and Delivery.
 - c. Mainstreaming objectives and outcomes of the Common Approach to Pollution in UN joint-country programming, starting at the Common Country Analysis (CCA) stage, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other inter-agency assistance planning mechanisms at all levels, from global to subnational.
 - d. Creation of joint programmes, initiatives or coalitions and joint mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Common Approach to Pollution, as whole or for selected objectives and outcomes.
 - e. Mobilization of the UN System to contribute to the development, implementation and outreach at key international policy processes, conferences and frameworks related to pollution, including chemicals and waste.
44. In developing the Implementation Plan, reference should be made to the outcomes of the 2023 SDG Summit (September 2023), the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5, September 2023), the Science-Policy Panel (negotiations to be concluded in 2024), and other instruments.
45. Monitoring of the Implementation Plan should draw on existing reporting to operationalize the framework and accelerate action, to achieve outlined objectives and outcomes. Concrete indicators to gauge progress in implementing the Common Approach to Pollution with baseline could be developed by the proposed IMG and include:
- a. Pollution prevention and reduction indicators of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)
 - b. Indicators reflecting mainstreaming of pollution prevention and reduction in the strategies, plans and frameworks of individual UN entities
 - c. Documentation of pollution footprint reduction in UN System operations and facilities, as a part of the UN Strategy for Sustainability Management 2020-2030.

¹¹³ An example of this is the EMG-coordinated preparation of "UN Common Offer to support an inclusive and just transition towards a plastic pollution-free planet" in preparation as of July 2023.

46. It is recommended to carry out a periodic mapping of existing UN System reporting mechanisms concerning pollution, in parallel with the Implementation Plan. For example, the SUN facility and the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment (SWFS),¹¹⁴ already provide a common set of reporting indicators to track progress against pollution. More indicators could be added. For example, objectives to reduce pollution, such as waste management, water management, and air pollution, are already included in Phase I of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System, 2020–2030, as indicators. Where possible, indicators associated with these objectives are reported as part of Greening the Blue, that highlights progress of UN entities towards corporate environmental sustainability.
47. The midterm report and final report on the implementation of the Common Approach to Pollution by 2030 should be prepared at the global level. This information could contribute to the Secretary-General’s review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233¹¹⁵ on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development.
48. The success of the Common Approach to Pollution would ultimately depend on the willingness and capacity within UN entities and partners to harmonize initiatives related to different aspects of pollution prevention and reduction. Resources need to be mobilized for implementation and monitoring at System and entity levels. Entities require sufficient internal capacity for implementation and reporting.
49. The goal is to strengthen political will among States and UN management. This strategic alignment is crucial in propelling our collective efforts towards a pollution-free planet.

¹¹⁴ EMG. (2019). System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the environment for the UN System (SWFS). Geneva.

https://unemg.org/images/emgdocs/UN_sws/Final%20final%20Version%20020516.pdf

¹¹⁵ UNGA. (2020). *Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review* of operational activities for development of the United Nations System: resolution 75/233. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/381/87/PDF/N2038187.pdf?OpenElement>

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Annex I: Framework of the Common Approach to Pollution

Goal	
<p>A pollution-free planet for the health and well-being of people and the environment, where the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all is ensured. This goal implies that pollution is prevented and reduced to levels that are not harmful to human and planetary health and includes the sound management of chemicals and wastes.</p>	
Impact Areas	
<p><u>People</u>: emphasizing the protection and promotion of human rights, health, food security and nutrition, and the well-being of individuals, groups, and communities.</p> <p><u>Planet</u>: focusing on the preservation and restoration of healthy and productive ecosystems to sustain life on Earth and continue providing ecosystem goods and services for society.</p> <p><u>Inclusive and sustainable growth</u>: focusing on fostering economic and societal transformation that balances the short-term needs of the present generation with the long-term needs of future generations.</p>	
Objectives	Outcomes
<p>1. Respect, protect and fulfil human rights, particularly the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.</p>	<p>1.1. The right of access to information about pollution and pollutants for all is promoted and supported.</p>
	<p>1.2. The meaningful and informed participation of all in decision-making processes addressing pollution is enhanced.</p>
	<p>1.3. Accountability and access to effective remedies for harm caused by pollution are increased.</p>
<p>2. Generate and make available knowledge, data and information on pollution to all to</p>	<p>2.1. Data and knowledge generation, availability and accessibility are enhanced,</p>

facilitate risk-informed decisions and actions.	while progress towards a pollution-free planet is measured.
	2.2. Science-based, evidence-based, risk-informed decision-making is promoted.
	2.3. Opportunities provided by digital transformation are harnessed.
3. Develop and implement policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, strategies, plans and actions addressing all types and sources of pollution, including promoting circular economy at the international, national, regional and local level.	3.1. The sound and integrated management of chemicals and waste is achieved throughout their life cycle in an integrated manner, in accordance with international frameworks, and through the leveraging of the role of the public and private sectors and engagement of all sectors of development.
	3.2. Policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, including protocols and incentives, are compliant with human rights obligations and informed by health, environmental, and social standards.
	3.3. Policies and legislations, including incentives addressing pollution are implemented, enforced and complied with strengthening capacities.
4. Increase systematic use of cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches to health, notably the One Health approach, to address pollution.	4.1. Linkages between pollution, health, human rights and other societal priorities, such as climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, food security and nutrition, and universal health coverage and primary health care, are understood and taken into account in policy and management.
	4.2. The application of the One Health approach is expanded to encompass pollution prevention and reduction.

<p>5. Protect vulnerable ecosystems and restore those damaged by pollution, while simultaneously managing ecosystems for pollution prevention and reduction.</p>	<p>5.1. Measures to protect, conserve, manage and restore ecosystems to prevent and reduce pollution and enhance ecosystem resilience are developed and implemented.</p>
	<p>5.2. Nature-based solutions are widely recognized as effective means for pollution prevention and reduction.</p>
	<p>5.3. Pollution prevention and reduction is mainstreamed into landscape and watershed management that takes into account the interconnectedness of resource uses, ecosystems and source-to-sea approach.</p>
<p>6. Transform high impact sectors for a pollution-free planet throughout value chains.</p>	<p>6.1. Multi-stakeholder action for pollution prevention and reduction is accelerated in high-impact sectors.</p>
	<p>6.2. Less polluting trade is promoted.</p>
	<p>6.3. Harmful subsidies are removed, subsidies are repurposed, and incentives are provided for pollution prevention and reduction action.</p>
<p>7. Identify, promote and implement safer and cleaner alternatives and sustainable and resilient infrastructure development.</p>	<p>7.1. Availability and use of safer alternatives are increased.</p>
	<p>7.2. Infrastructure for pollution prevention and reduction is promoted and strengthened.</p>
	<p>7.3. Infrastructure resilience is strengthened to prevent and manage pollution risks.</p>
<p>8. Identify, incentivize, and mobilize predictable and sustainable financial resources for pollution-free action and risk reduction.</p>	<p>8.1. Pollution externalities are better accounted for through economic analysis and tools to redirect investments to less-polluting economic activities.</p>
	<p>8.2. Access to finances for pollution prevention and reduction is increased, including development aid in particular, by realizing co-</p>

	benefits across environmental and development priorities.
	8.3. Industries are incentivized to follow the polluter pays principle and to internalize the costs of pollution.
9. Raise global awareness about adverse impacts of pollution and the role of consumers in driving sustainable consumption and production, so as to inform and inspire action.	9.1. Awareness of pollution impacts on human rights, health and a healthy environment, food security and nutrition, and the economy is raised through unified messaging and coordinated campaigns.
	9.2. Increased demand for fair and just consumption, resulting in adoption of sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, and responsible consumerism.
10. Prevent and reduce pollution, risks and impacts associated with man-made and natural hazards, conflicts, and humanitarian response.	10.1. Knowledge generation and exchange, on the impact of pollution in protracted crisis and fragile settings is increased among and across the environmental, development and humanitarian communities.
	10.2. Pollution prevention and reduction through emergency preparedness and early warning systems is integrated in the disaster response, conflict prevention and peace building strategies.
	10.3. Pollution associated with a humanitarian response is reduced.
11. Mainstream pollution prevention and reduction and maximize resource use efficiency in UN System operations and programming: Lead by example.	11.1. Environmental sustainability is enhanced in the management of UN facilities and operations and championed by each agency, funds and programmes.
	11.2. Pollution prevention and reduction is effectively mainstreamed within the UN System and its entities in their programmatic

	work, as part of the system-wide effort for addressing environmental and social standards in programming.
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